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Traveling in style is a tradition with Bay Area. We've chartered the former SAMUEL KING TIGRETT, a One-Compartment, Three-Bedroom, Eight-Roomette, Four-Section Sleeper formerly of the MIDNIGHT SPECIAL, and will travel on AMTRAK trains from Oakland to Boston via the Washington Sunset Route with stopovers in Los Angeles, New Orleans and Washington, D.C. The run to Maine will be by chartered RDC from Boston to Kennebunk and return. Convention headquarters is the beautiful SHAWMUT INN, located on the shores of the Atlantic.

Return itinerary includes Philadelphia, Spokane/Seattle (via Havre) using the BROADWAY LIMITED and the former Great Northern route. Electric railway enthusiasts will trip out at Seashore, which has far and away the most extensive collection of streetcars and interurbans in the U.S. Even if you're not a streetcar freak, there's still enough train riding to satisfy the most ardent fan. No space worries either--we'll have our own private car throughout. Plan now to be aboard. Write for details of the compleat railfan vacation to:

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Naptras

Scott Rogers, Vice President
RR3
Freeport, IL 61032

rail travel newsletter

30¢

VOL. 4 NO. 15
FIRST ISSUE OF
AUGUST 1974
#89

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Express Ads

Railroad Uniform Buttons 50¢ each postpaid. Denver Tramway Co., Union Pacific, Chicago Great Western, Grand Trunk, Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines, Nickel Plate, South Shore Line, Norfolk and Western, Central of Georgia, North Shore Line, Lehigh Valley and Seaboard. J. Lajoie, 22 Stevens, Methuen, Mass. 01844.

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$1--Railfans' Multimodal Transportation Guide to Vicinity of Los Angeles Union Station; order S #119-R. $2.50--San Joaquin Newspapers--Amtrak Lovefest over a New Train; order "Joy in the Valley." R.J. Swan, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

WE ARE LITERALLY COMBING THE NATION FOR RAILROAD TIMETABLES. We offer liberal cash payments for any quantity, any dates. A wise seller will profit substantially from giving us first opportunity to make an offer. Extensive references available of course. If it's a timetable, we want it. Antique Timecard Acquisitors, 3505 Orchard Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006.

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AMTRAK PERSONNEL ATTENTION: Try our exclusive AEP (Amtrak Excuse Program) on your computer. Sophisticated program provides a credible excuse for any situation. You've heard the old ones--"Better times are coming," "Wait till next summer," "These things take time, you know,"--now be prepared with a fresh set of Post-Watergate excuses. Inquire about free demonstration on your computer.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads 25¢ per line for line of 80 spaces, with $1.00 minimum and remittance with order. Display Ads: $15 per page (5x8), $7.50 half page, $3.75 quarter page. Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 15 (Whole No. 89), First Issue of August, 1974. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $7.00 per year; single copy 30¢ (vol. 1-3 25¢). STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Kenneth Maylath, East Coast Correspondent; Peter Roehm, Northeastern Correspondent; Peter Putnam Bretz, Roving Correspondent; John Ferry, Midwestern Correspondent. Mailing date this issue: August 15, 1974.

ON THE COVER:

The Royal Hudson steam engine running on the British Columbia Railway in late July. See page 8 for more on this excursion train. Photo by Wes Roberts.

New York-Montreal

In one of the most upbeat Amtrak events of the year, THE ADIRONDACK, Amtrak's newest New York-Montreal train, made its maiden voyage on August 5. It was a press run one way from New York to the Canadian city, with regular service beginning the following day.

For the new service Amtrak prepared a revised Form 3 Washington-NY-Montreal schedule and a 6-page color brochure giving schedules and other information on the new daylight train. The ADIRONDACK, which replaces the LAURENTIAN discontinued when Amtrak began operations in 1971, leaves New York's Grand Central Station at 8:30am as part of the EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS headed toward Buffalo. At Albany/Rensselaer the train takes off on its own, gaining a few cars, including a Skyline dome leased from Canadian Pacific. It reaches Montreal's Windsor Station at 6:50pm after stops at Croton-Harmon, Poughkeepsie, Rhinecliff, Hudson, Albany, Watervliet-Colonie, Mechanicville, Saratoga Springs, Fort Edward, Whitehall, Fort Ticonderoga, Westport, Plattsburgh, Rouses Point, Lacolle, and Montreal West. Southbound the train leaves Montreal at 9:30am and reaches New York at 7:50pm.

For the press run, a D&H railroad observation car was coupled to the end at Albany-Rensselaer, the CP dome lounge and other cars were added, and power changed to a yellow and silver D&H Alco PA. From New York to Albany the train consisted of four refurbished D&H coaches on the rear of the EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS. The train is not using a dining car; this will be added in November when refurbishing is completed.

Governor Wilson of New York got aboard at Albany and took the opportunity to proclaim that the new train was only the beginning of vast improvements coming in rail transportation in the state. Voters in November will be asked to approve a $250 million rail bond issue which would permit the startup of TurboTrain service on the New York-Albany corridor within two years. The ADIRONDACK is being financed in part by the state under section 403-B of the Amtrak Act. Other state supported rail projects upcoming are a Binghamton-Port Jervis-Hoboken run to be ready this fall and a New York-Buffalo-Niagara Falls-Detroit via Ontario service.

At Albany a labor dispute over numbers of men assigned to the train flared up, and management personnel took over to run the train on to Montreal. Track improvements now underway on the D&H will allow a 40-min speedup in the schedule by Oct. 31. In addition, the state is allocating about $1 million to improve the roadbed north of Rensselaer to allow 70mph speeds within two years.

There was a gala turnout for the train all along the route, and it appears that Amtrak's and New York's newest long distance train has a bright future.

A VOTE TO EXTEND AMTRAK SERVICE TO MORE STATES

Earlier this month the Senate voted to pass an amendment to an Amtrak bill to extend Amtrak service to the population center of all 48 contiguous states. This would mean 5 specific services: to Boise, Idaho (from Portland, Oregon); to Sioux Falls, South Dakota; to Manchester, New Hampshire; to Portland, Maine; and to Des Moines, Iowa. The new Boise service is estimated to take $14.7 million for startup and $23.2 million for the other 4 services. The bill now goes to a joint House-Senate conference committee, and then must be passed again by both houses of Congress.

AMTRAK FALL TIMETABLES TO BE READY SEPTEMBER 15

September 15 is the changeover date to fall schedules for Amtrak trains, and Amtrak's chief of timetables, Bruce Heard, is now at the printer in Atlanta to supervise production of the new schedules. One change known to be coming up is the reverting back to tri-weekly from daily operation of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA. However, Amtrak plans to run the train daily during Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and Easter holidays, again next summer, and continuously thereafter. In a letter to concerned Senator Mike Mansfield, who had said he would make daily operation of the NCH a line item in Amtrak appropriations measures, Amtrak's Roger Lewis said he was pleased with ridership, but it was not compelling for daily operation.

LETTERS

I was most gratified to see such enthusiastic response to my car notes article in the "letters" column of the last issue. Mike Blaszak has zeroed in on some excellent points, and I'd like to address a few of them. The most important, concerning journalism is that indeed some topics have been overlooked. I could write a dissertation on car design, but it would be too long to print.

When I suggested the added initial cost of heavier equipment, I did so with the idea that there would be benefits flowing from this cost. One initial payoff of higher initial investment is less operating or maintenance expense (a classic business school case study). In the case of heavier cars, the initial expense means less maintenance cost, and also less depreciation cost, as the cars can last 40-50 years or more. This means that the car will not have to be replaced 2-4 times in that period. Inflation and increasing scarcity of raw materials in the years to come will place an increasing emphasis on longevity. In the future, Amtrak might not be able to afford to replace short-lived cars.

Much of the cost of a car is labor, the cost of which is generally rising faster than that of materials, and which implies that the cost differential between lighter and heavier cars will close with the expected changes upcoming in the world economies.

A heavier car also means less loss-and-damage claims. With the going rate for a dead body in the transport business now in the $200-300,000, loss-and-damage will be higher for a lighter car. Insurance rate-executives and actuaries can calculate very quickly payments for deaths and injuries for various types of equipment. A heavier car will mean less for insurance premiums; or if self-insured, smaller entries in the claims account of the expense columns--something surely to be of increasing importance as the regard for human life continues to climb among the juries of the U.S. legal system-A life saved is much money saved.

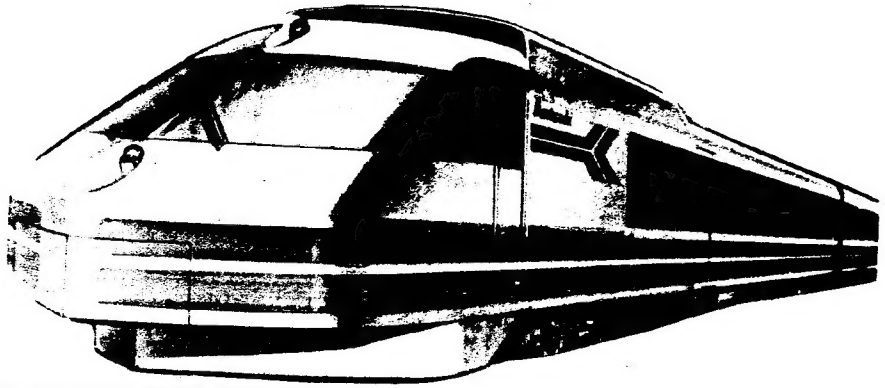
It is my feeling that one of the heaviest of the cretinizing forces in all of railroading is the overiding instinct to "protect the track." It hits abroad, too. In 1969, a track maintenance executive of London Transport told my boss at the Ministry of Transport in Ottawa (while he was on a trade mission to England) that "our track would be in much better shape if only the operating department wouldn't run so many trains over it." "Protecting the track" is a heavy force obscuring what railroading is really all about. I am among those who feel that the most important point here is that of being concerned about what the track does to the cars (and thus to the passengers), rather than Blaszak's worry about what the cars will do to the track. Whatever is going to be done to the track is going to be done by heavy freights and the locomotives that pull them; and passenger trains, even of 90-100 ton cars, will be responsible for only a modest amount of deterioration to the track except on N.E. corridor runs.

Perhaps Blaszak or some other knowledgeable reader of RTN could explain why the Budd Tubular train remains out of service, even though the Amtrak car shortage is severe. Also, we'll have to wait until the wheel of fate turns and puts a Silverliner in a tough wreck situation. Contemporary cars in Canada, built for the Toronto GO Train service in 1967, are already becoming rough riding, noisy, and rattly. I do not think it entirely coincidental that this push-pull equipment, formerly operated from a cab built in to one of the H-S passenger coaches when being pushed is now controlled from an ex-Ontario Northland F-unit when the train is being pushed. Obviously there has been some thought that a very light GO Transit car could be peeled open in a wreck just as with the ICG Highliner equipment. Under the new arrangement, if there is a wreck with GO Transit equipment while being pushed, the de-powered F unit will take the brunt of the collision. Additional information on GO Transit and other extra-light stock will help shed considerable light on the questions raised earlier, and I am hoping that RTN readers will not be reluctant to report what they know, for wisdom is not knowledge unless it is shared.

Seattle, Washington — Glenn Lee

Want to add my "well done" to those of other readers on Glenn Lee"s excellent article on car design. I was so favorably impressed I took the liberty of passing it on to my Congressman, Jerry Pettis. A copy of his response is enclosed because of its pertinent comments.

(continued on page 17)



NEW TURBOLINER DESIGN ANNOUNCED

When Amtrak's 7 new French-designed Turboliners are delivered from the Rohr Corporation, they will resemble the above drawing, having a redesigned front end to cover the coupler and appeal more to American esthetics, according to an announcement from the American builder. The equipment will be fitted with Amtrak's own seats, appointments and color scheme. Amtrak also announced that it will "refurbish" the interiors of the two French trains now running Chicago-St. Louis to alter their appearance in a similar vein.

SUMMARY OF NEW AMTRAK ROUTES

Some new Amtrak routes were mentioned on page 3. Other data available on upcoming new routes are summarized here: Amtrak's Chicago-Pt. Huron train on Grand Trunk is now promised for the first week of October. The Cincinnati-Norfolk train should get underway the first quarter of 1975; Congress ordered this service, largely at the insistence of Rep. Harley Staggers of West Virginia, in a recent supplemental appropriations bill, and the DOT announced it as a second experimental route for 1974. The first experimental route, of course, is the Chicago-Cleveland-Boston train expected to see the light of day in about 6 months. We have a tentative preliminary schedule for the Cleveland train: it would leave Chicago at 1:50pm with one section arriving New York at 9:30am and the other reaching Boston at 11:10 am. It would leave Boston at 4:50pm, with the New York section leaving there at 6:30pm, and Chicago arrival coming at 12:15pm the next day. The Chicago-NY section would carry a baggage-mail car, slumbercoach, 2 52-seat coaches, diner, and a 10/6 sleeper (and possibly an 11bdrm sleeper). The Chicago-Boston section would have a baggage-dorm, 2 52-seat coaches, a 10/6 sleeper, a diner-lounge running Boston Albany, and 2 64-seat coaches running Albany-NY. It would appear likely that the train would combine with Amtrak's Empire Service. The restoration of train service between New York and Detroit this fall was announced by Amtrak and the states of New York and Michigan on July 17. The train is an extension of the EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS, leaving New York at 8:30am, and continuing on to Detroit, arriving at about 10pm. Eastbound it would leave Detroit about 8am and reach New York at 9:50pm.

In other service changes, Amtrak has dropped the thru Los Angeles-New York sleeper for the remainder of the summer, due to poor performance of the NATIONAL LTD and low patronage. The DOT ordered the Penn Central on Aug. 1 to shut down its Chicago to Louisville line until it could be brought up to federal safety standards. Effective that date the FLORIDIAN was re-routed via C&EI and L&N Chicago-Evansville-Nashville. Amtrak charter bus was to operate via railroad stations Chicago-Logansport-Indianapolis-Louisville-Bowling Green-Nashville. In addition, the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY was re-routed via the C&O Cincinnati-Chicago, with Indianapolis service dropped. Apparently Amtrak was providing fares for transfer between Amtrak and Greyhound stations in Cincinnati. The DOT, responding to increasing alarm in the press over the mounting numbers of derailments in Indiana, said the 67 miles of worst track are between Chicago and Jeffersonville, Indiana. The 67 miles of bad track are scattered over a 419-mile route.

canadian news letter

TORONTO'S GO TRANSIT system has begun a 2-week test of double-decker coaches on its busy Lakeshore line. The gallery cars, 9 such borrowed from CP Rail which uses them in its Montreal commuter runs to Rigaud, began running July 22 in an effort to increase passenger capacity by 75%. In return GO Transit loaned some of its Hawker-Siddeley cars to CP Rail. The gallery cars carry 168 riders each, compared with 94 in GO coaches. The Lakeshore line is the original GO Transit line started in 1967. The route now carries 21,500 passengers daily. Trains on it are limited to 10 cars each because of the length of stations, and can run 20 minutes apart.

Later in July, Ontario Transport Minister John Rhodes announced that the double-decker cars would replace all present Hawker-Siddeley equipment on the route. He said that about $35 million would be needed for the changeover, and that existing GO Transit cars would be re-assigned to new services now in the planning stage. The Hawker-Siddeley cars cost about $240,000 each and the heavier gallery cars about $450,000.

In the first run of the evidently successful experiment, gallery cars left Hamilton at 7:20am, arriving at Toronto Union Station at 8:30 with about 1100 commuters aboard.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS said in mid-July that it plans to introduce TurboTrains to the Montreal-Ottawa route, hopefully in early August. The new service would run in the morning when one of the Montreal-Toronto Turbos normally lays over in Montreal.

CP RAIL'S FERRY "Princess Marguerite" has been doing less business than the company had anticipated when it drew up 1974 summer schedules. While CP felt the Spokane Expo would increase traffic generally in the Northwest, by the 3rd weekend of July the Port Angeles-Victoria crossing had handled 100 fewer cars northbound than in 1973, altho the season began a week earlier. By contrast, foot patronage is up, as people park in Port Angeles and see Victoria on foot. There is a possibility that the Sept. 8 ending date on the Port Angeles service and also the Oct. 31 ending date on the Seattle run may be advanced. CP is watching the situation closely.

CAN-AM HOVER EXPRESS, a hovercraft service between Toronto and Niagara-on-the-Lake across Lake Ontario began June 18, competing somewhat with the three daily RDC runs on CN to Niagara Falls. On July 18 service was expanded to 7 daily departures each direction. The one-way trip costs $6 for adults.

AFTER SEVEN YEARS of delay, the CN-CP-owned development firm has asked to begin construction of Metro Centre around the Toronto Union Station. The firm still plans to relocate the station, while giving in to citizen groups insisting that the Great Hall be retained. Many additional groups are joining the Toronto city council in asking the rail passenger facilities at the present site be expanded, perhaps by placing them underground at a cost of $140 million. The developer rejects this proposal as unrealistic. Mayor David Crombie of Toronto has Ottawa for $100 million to make a multi-modal transport terminal of the station, adding impetus to the drive to retain the building.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION study of streetcar costs has found that streetcars not only move faster in difficult traffic conditions, but they are also cheaper to operate than buses. The report was authored by TTC's planning and treasury staffs and concludes that 4 streetcars can do the work of 5 buses, an important factor in reducing the line's chronic shortage of operators. In 1972 a streetcar cost $1.32 per mile to operate, compared with $1.44 for a bus.

A STRIKE OF Toronto transit drivers is scheduled for August 12, the day these lines are written. It would hit the city two days before the opening of the Canadian National Exhibition, attended by 3.5 million people last year, and would halt buses, streetcars, trolleys and subways.

SEVERAL TRIPS BY the "Queen of New Westminster" on the Vancouver-Nanaimo ferry run were cancelled in late July to give the crew an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the newly purchased "Queen of Surrey," the ex-"Stena Danica," which begins service as an extra boat in early August on both the Nanaimo and Langdale runs. Connecting bus service to the cancelled runs was also eliminated. Ferry traffic has been very heavy, with 5-hour waits for boats on some lines that depart hourly or more frequently.

THE FORMER FERRY "San Diego," mainstay on the Coronado run until 1969, and thence from Port Townsend to Keystone, Washington until 1973, has been converted into a cruise vessel at Vancouver, B.C., styled to resemble a riverboat. The diesel-electric powerplant will be replaced by a straight diesel for cruising; but the basic structure will remain intact so it can be reconverted for ferry purposes if necessary. Present plans are to place a restaurant on the cardeck. Bars and possibly a casino are scheduled for the passenger deck.

THE TORONTO BOROUGH of North York is phasing out its unsuccessful dial-a-bus service, and it may be replaced with subscriber buses. Each subscriber would be guaranteed a seat over his route. Some large businesses might help to reduce traffic pressures by subscribing.

NOTES ON A CROSS-CANADA TRIP

by Ken Maylath

(This is a sequel to the trans-continental U.S. trip described in the 1st July RTN)

Leave Vancouver on time on CP CANADIAN - in sleeper "Abbott Manor" to Toronto (space to Montreal sold out 6 wks ahead except drawing room) - no pancakes or French toast in diner - lost time in Fraser River Canyon due to track work; hour late at Golden - Winnipeg almost on time - Thunder Bay down 15min - late sunset of early summer allows good viewing of Lake Superior scenery - Schreiber 35min late due to freight meets - Sudbury: train splits into Toronto & Montreal sections - observation "Prince Albert Park" replaced by another identical car - move takes 55min, leave 45 min late - Sudbury to Toronto run routine; arrive Toronto 15min late - CN's SUPER CONTINENTAL pulling in almost 2 hours behind.

Next day in Toronto, take 4:30 Turbo to Montreal. Large crowd aboard - seats assigned by car, but not by individual seat - leave 3min late - top speed 95mph - the schedule is tight and slow orders due to track work make for 10-min late arrival -

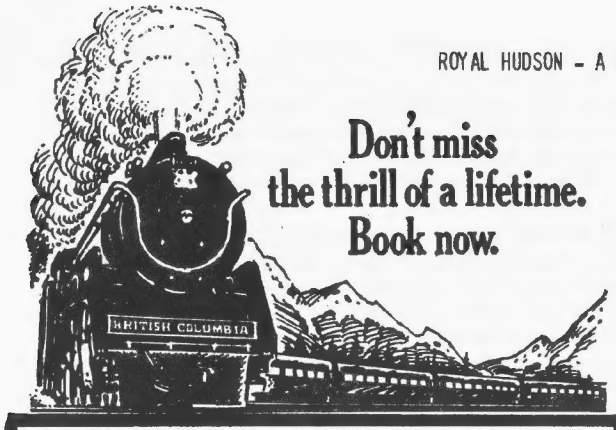
Observing trains in Montreal: SUPER CONTINENTAL arrives 55min late, 130 detrain - OCEAN in 2 hours late, 100 detrain - Morning Rapido from Quebec on time, 100 detrain - Biggest load seen in 2 days of watching at Montreal (Sun. & Mon.) was Amtrak's MONTREALER: 150 detrain - Montreal Metro is on strike.

Monday: leave for New York on MONTREALER - depart 5min late with 90 passengers - regurbished sleeper has bad batteries - reach border in 2 hours, and inspection consumes 55min - 30min late at St. Albans, 15 min late at White River Junction - CV roadbed well-maintained - arrive New York's Penn Station 25min late.

* * *

CN IS OPERATING its weekend special from Winnipeg to the cottage and lake resort area in Western Ontario this summer. The service had been discontinued in the late 1960's. Friday-only departure from Winnipeg is 5:45pm, with arrival 9:50pm in Farlane, Ontario, some 140 miles distant. Return from Farlane is 6:10pm on Sundays, with arrival in Winnipeg 10pm. It runs thru the Aug. 30-Sept. 2 weekend with one additional round trip for the Thanksgiving holiday east from Winnpieg Oct. 11, returning Oct. 14.

MINISTER OF TRANSPORT of Ontario is developing a plan to enlarge GO Train commuter patronage from the present 21,000 daily to 200,000 a day. Electrification, additional track and signal systems would be needed. CP Rail lines would also be used. One requirement would be development of the Lakeshore line to handle a train every 4 minutes, considerably more frequent than the 20-minute headway now in effect.



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Daily from June 21 to July 7 then Wed. thru Sun. and Statutory Holidays to Sept 2.

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Reservations are recommended. Phone 987-4411 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. After hours phone 987-6216. Reserved tickets must be picked up at the British Columbia Railway Station by noon of the previous day.

Tickets may also be purchased at the Vancouver Bus Depot ticket office. No phone reservations will be taken.

Connecting bus service leaves Vancouver Bus Depot at 9:15 a.m. with stops at Georgia and Granville, Georgia and Burrard, the north end of the Lions Gate Bridge at Marine Drive and Marine Drive at Capilano. Regular transit rates apply.

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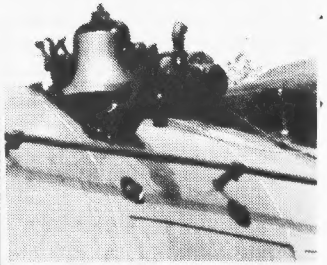
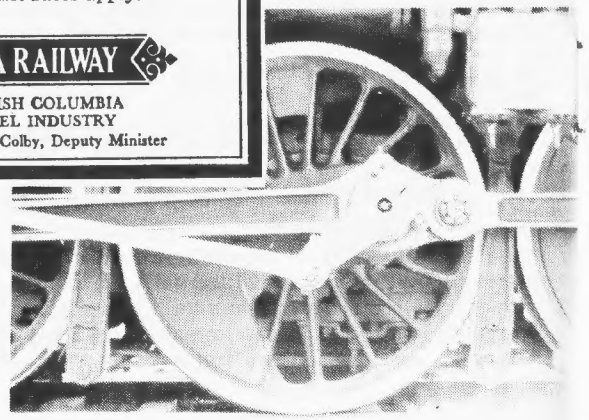




Photos by
Wes Roberts

Vacationing in THE AMTRAK ERA

by Jim Russell

Being the editor of a fast-growing rail publication carries the disadvantage of keeping you too busy to ride trains as frequently as you used to. Too much of your train information comes second-hand--which means you miss out on the fun; tho sometimes you avoid the horror story situations as well.

But summer vacation provides an opportunity for some rail traveling--not as much as you'd like, but enough to make a good story.

The rail part of vacationing this year began with an automobile trip to a rail line that carries no passengers anymore. The Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad is not a well-known line, tho surprisingly it's shown, labelled "P&SR" on current AAA maps, such as that titled "North Bay Counties" (California). The line is now part of Northwestern Pacific, which in turn belongs to Southern Pacific. It was built about 1913 as an interurban line, and was electrified until 1947. Rails run from Petaluma northward to Sebastopol and a little beyond to Ross Station Road (you can trace the right of way a bit further to Forestville, a section abandoned about ten years ago). Another segment runs west from Santa Rosa to Sebastopol, carrying approximately one freight daily from the NWP to the rich agricultural south of the Russian River. The Petaluma-Sebastopol segment was abandoned just a few months ago, and Sonoma County plans to turn the right of way into a bike path. In former days commuters could catch a steamer at Petaluma to travel to San Francisco down the Petaluma River.

In this era of Amtrak and skyrocketing demand for rail travel and commuting, plans have been proposed for putting commuter trains on the now-freight-carrying P&SR line. Our visit told us it's unlikely this will happen. The people who are settling here in increasing numbers--in moves facilitated by a short drive on highway 101 from the Bay Area and easy Golden Gate Transit bus commuting as far north as Santa Rosa--are doing so to escape urban congestion and live the good life in this rich wine country. They're fearful that commuter trains would bring too many more people and destroy the values they sought in moving here. The New York Times in a big July 28 article described Petaluma's fight to control population growth, including an ordinance approved last year to limit housing permits, an ordinance the courts ruled invalid and which is now under appeal.

In Sebastopol the lightweight tracks run down the middle of the main street, which is also highway 116, and are obviously used. Streetcars would look right at home there.

Meanwhile, further north, in the Sierra, Walt Disney Productions is announcing plans to buy up land from Southern Pacific Land Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. to

build another resort with a "theme village" and all that nonsense to bring as many as 10,000 overnight visitors to Independence Lake, 12 miles north of Truckee. The Sierra Club will try to block the venture as it did with the proposed Mineral King development.

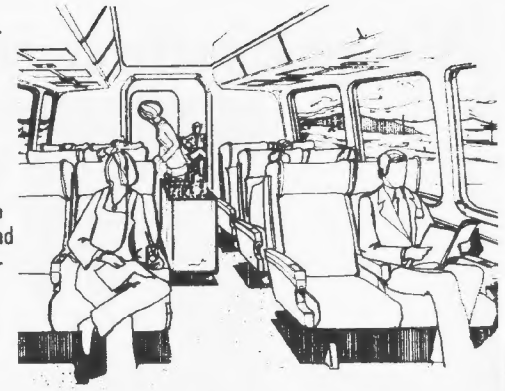
Truckee, as all readers know, is the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR stop for Lake Tahoe inaugurated last Oct. 28 (see RTN, Second October Issue, 1973). Phase two of summer vacation found us at that mountain station ready to board the westbound SFZ back to Oakland after a lengthy exploration of the Sierra.

Just before this trip we latched onto our first copy of Amtrak's new brochure (printed in May) entitled "The Amtrak Era." This 4-page folder presents a "brief preview of coming attractions"--"projections for the future." One of these projections is a sketch of a futuristic railroad station with a sign pointing to a "reserved Florida express," a train looking like a cross between a Canadian LRC and a BART car. Other sketches showed an airline-style coach interior with a hostess wheeling a cart of beverages or something down aisle, and a sleek cafeteria car with a chef grilling steak before your eyes.

The folder said that "Amtrak is making it easy to travel by train," but at Truckee, California this morning Amtrak was doing anything but making it easy for the gathering group of train travelers.

The ZEPHYR is supposed to leave Truckee at 8:22am. The station is open, the sign said, from 7am to 4pm daily, except for an hour out for lunch. We arose bright and early and arrived at 8am to catch our train. To our surprise the station was closed, there was no Amtrak person around to advise us, and there was no sign to indicate what was the matter or whether or not the train was on time.

We of course hoped that the train would arrive on schedule so we could have breakfast in the diner as we watched the High Sierra scenery glide by. We knew from experience that the diner would stop serving breakfast at about 9:00, so it would be close. If the train was only a little late we could make it, but if it was quite a bit late we would have to set out for a local restaurant before boarding. And what if it was a moderate amount



of time behind--say arriving at 8:45? It would be a difficult decision whether to chance missing the train as we sat in a restaurant or to hope that the diner would admit us at that late hour. If we miscalculated it would mean that breakfast would be Cracker-jacks in the lounge car. And obviously Amtrak was not at all helpful in its failure to communicate at all with its hopeful passengers.

Soon someone spotted some Southern Pacific freight employees in another nearby office, and we knocked at the door and inquired what time No. 5 would arrive. One of them said it had just left Sparks, so allowing 50 minutes to reach Truckee, it should be in about 9.

We didn't know if their information was accurate, but we had no other to go on, so we decided to look for a restaurant. Another passenger recommended the Squeeze In across the street. "We brought you all the people waiting for the train," she told the waitress as we found tables. We looked harried, so the waitress said "You've got plenty time--the train is ALWAYS an hour late. And in the winter it's three hours." The menu was adorned with the famous Oliphant cartoon of the boozed-up station agent incredulously facing a sea of hands outstretched for Amtrak train tickets.

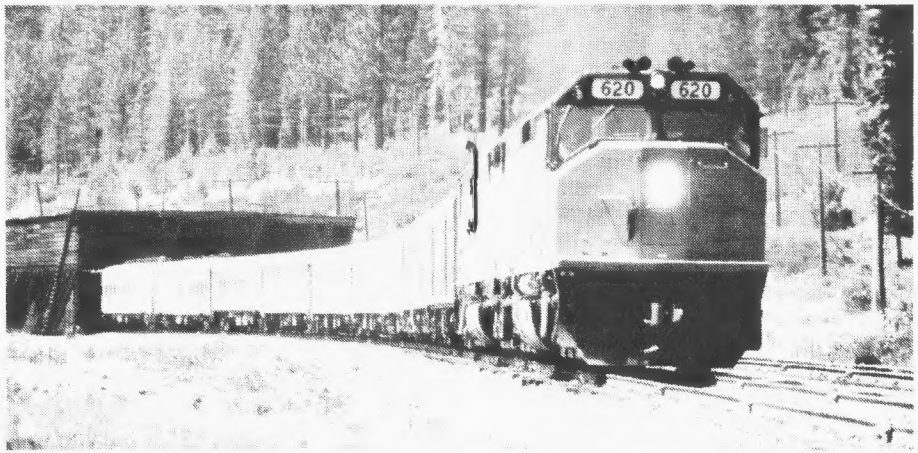
Our breakfast was good and reasonably priced, but we were running low on cash and had hoped to use a credit card for breakfast in the train diner. We were back at the station before 9 to find the situation unchanged--no train in sight, the station padlocked, no announcements posted.

One advantage of the situation began to manifest itself--days of lazing in the mountain sun had taken their toll; we were too relaxed to return to the hectic grind of editorship. But now Amtrak's morning performance was beginning to rectify that problem--the adrenalin was beginning to flow and we were already conjuring up letters to Roger Lewis, the ICC, NARP, senators and congressmen. This wasn't a major hardship for us personally, but it was just another example of the failure of Amtrak's system that people write us about in endless letters. Most of them never see the light of day in RTN, but now a personal experience could serve to dramatize the mishaps of many other passengers over the nationwide system.

It was now past 9:00 and the passengers were becoming uncomfortable in the steadily warming sun. The one outdoor bench couldn't seat everyone and Roger Lewis's Amtrak had seen fit not to let us into the station that our tax money was supporting. There was no access to restrooms or the station telephone. One woman said she had come down to the station twice the previous day (since no one answered the telephone) to buy a ticket, and each time the station was padlocked. She was quite concerned about buying a ticket since she wanted to ride the train--she said the bus was just too uncomfortable. Several buses came and went at the adjoining Greyhound station as we waited. But significantly, no one opted for the Hound. They just continued to wait, patiently and impatiently.

Among the group was a doctor seeing a friend off. He was concerned because he had to call his hospital periodically to check on the condition of a patient seriously injured in an auto wreck. He couldn't, of course, get access to the station telephone.

While we were at breakfast another SP employee had told someone else the train would be in at 9:30. Pretty soon someone appeared and opened the station agent's office--but not the waiting room. The woman who wanted a ticket went to him to inquire. "The Amtrak man isn't here today, but I'll sell you a ticket," the unidentified man said, and he did so. Pretty soon someone said something aloud about the station closure being a violation of ICC passenger train standards, and before you could bat an eye the man who had arrived whipped around and opened the waiting room door. But almost simultaneously another man who seemed to be an SP employee brought his dog over on a long leash and tied him so he stood in the doorway, barking and playfully snapping at waiting passengers as his owner stood grinning. "I hate dogs like that," said the ticket-buying woman. No one entered the station.



JULY 27, 1974: SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, train 6, emerges from a snow shed high in the Sierra. Two Amtrak engines are pulling. Telephoto by Wes Roberts.

We noticed that a sign over the ticket window read "out to lunch." How symbolic. Amtrak has been out to lunch for over 3 years, as far as we can tell.

Finally at 9:30, one hour and 15 minutes late, the harmonious steam whistle-like horns of a new Amtrak engine were heard, and the SFZ pulled up to the station. Two new diesels were pulling 11 old cars, among which, we observed with disappointment, was no dome. We knew where most of the domes were--in the shops in St. Paul where they'd been all thru the busy summer season. Nice planning.

Local railfans nickname this train the "Rainbow Express" from its varied consists, and the "Emigrant Train" from the quality of its service. The rainbow colors were in evidence today, tho the train is getting an ever-increasing percentage of Amtrak-painted cars. There were five coaches and three sleepers, all quite full. One sleeper and one or two coaches were refurbished, as was the diner. A flattop UP lounge and a baggage-dorm completed the consist. All the cars seemed to ride well, and they stayed on the track all the way to Oakland.

We went into the lounge to find a repulsive situation. The air was thick with cigarette smoke and the air conditioning wasn't working. The car was filled with litter, even at this early hour. It looked as if it hadn't been cleaned up since it left Chicago at least. The attendant seemed to have gotten up on the wrong side of the bed, and his stock of drinks and snacks was extremely poor.

But the real fun came at lunchtime in the diner. This was a pleasant place to eat, and the food was good tho some of the portions are skimpy. We were pleasantly surprised to find the waiter taking verbal orders. We have always disliked having to write out orders on a form--what other restaurant makes you do that? And when it came time to pay, we were equally surprised to receive a verbal bill; that is, no written receipt. We handed the waiter a credit card, one of the 5 cards that Amtrak's Service Bulletin of July 1 indicated would be

honored "in all dining and food service cars on long-haul Amtrak trains" effective July 1. The waiter reacted with something like shock, and said they didn't take that card. Whereupon we recited the list of cards that Roger Lewis's Amtrak said they would honor, and he went to check with the Steward.

He returned to say that no, they don't use that card. Instead of arguing, we produced a second type of card also on the list of five. This time it was accepted, and after a long wait the waiter returned with a written bill and a credit card slip so badly stamped that the account number was unreadable. Just to test the system, we signed it without further comment. But we wondered what the other credit card agency would do if it knew that some Amtrak diners are turning away its business.

A passenger who had ridden the train eastbound a week earlier said that the diner had accepted the card that ours found unacceptable. On that occasion verbal orders without receipts were also taken. We noticed this day that patrons at some tables were required to write out their orders; apparently the practice varies from one waiter to another.

In our naivete we accepted this situation until we told our story to a seasoned railroad man who reacted strongly: "Of course! When they don't give a receipt they don't have to report the sale to Amtrak! And of course there's no one in charge there to make sure they turn in the money."

Could this be possible? We were shocked. Could some waiters be pocketing dining car receipts? Could the Steward be an accomplice to such an act? It could explain the reluctance to accept credit cards, where they would be forced to produce a receipt. Our waiter told us they were going to recommend the elimination of credit cards when they returned to Chicago. Strange things are said and done on Amtrak trains. What restaurant on the ground what tell its customers it wanted to eliminate credit cards? What restaurant on the ground would ask patrons to pay without a written bill? Why doesn't Amtrak have a supervisor aboard to see that things are run properly?

Way back in one of the sleepers we found a hidden rack of brochures meant to be distributed to passengers outlining the features of the train. No wonder they weren't distributed--the most important features of the train listed were non-existent on our train--the dome lounge car, the service director, the passenger service representative. We quickly calculated that it would be very easily possible for Amtrak to lose enough money in diner pilfering in a single day to pay the salary of a service director for that day.

The whole problem here is that there is no Amtrak supervision of this longest of long-haul trains. This has been said in these pages several times over the past 3 years. Back in 1971 Amtrak said, "We're making the trains worth traveling again; all we ask of you is a little patience." Our patience has worn thin in 3 years. When it looks as if it might cost Amtrak nothing to hire service directors to take charge of this and similar trains--and there must be plenty of people who would be delighted to have such a job--we fail to see a reason why they should go a single day longer without them.

Is this the "Amtrak Era"? Our brochure said that Amtrak has an "attitude of gracious warmth and hospitality" that you'll spot "when you step aboard." What we spotted was an uncoordinated, sullen, disinterested and seemingly incompetent bunch of employees. Instead of hiring fancy writers and artists to dream up brochures full of claptrap, why not hire some people where they're needed--taking charge of major trains and exhibiting a genuine concern for passengers instead of a continuation of the public-be-damned attitude of the pre-Amtrak railroads?

The train trip was a distinctly discordant note in an otherwise harmonious vacation. We're very sorry to have to report this. We'd much rather be writing about the fantastic scenery and other beautiful qualities of rail travel, but the situation was so bad that the good points were almost overlooked.

We won't dwell on how the air conditioning failed in our neatly refurbished coach halfway to Oakland or how the air conditioning was marginal in most of the other cars. We did arrive at our "end point" only 15 minutes late, with an hour gained by steady 70mph running with those beautifully smooth and powerful Amtrak diesels, and by much padding in the schedule. So SP gets credit for an on-time arrival, while points along the way were inconvenienced by lateness of over an hour.

We shall expect distinct improvements in this train by the next time we ride it. Amtrak's been penny-wise and dollar-foolish about some important matters of train operation. Will it take new management at Amtrak to see the light and really move with competence and style into the Amtrak Era?

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Most extraordinary of all was the quietness. Insulation factors built into the car's construction enable passengers to hear each other perfectly when they converse in ordinary tones."

--United Press release describing DOT State-of-the-Art transit car, July 22

(And grammatical factors constructed into the writer's fabrication made it imperfectly hard to hear what he means.)

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THE DOT STUDIES AMTRAK

The Department of Transportation's Annual Report on Amtrak, expected last March, has finally appeared bearing the date of July 22. To our eyes it was a tremendously disappointing document. It may be the last such report over the signature of Secretary Claude S. Brinegar, since newly-installed President Ford reportedly told newsmen, while still Vice-President, that he would replace Brinegar should be become President. (Brinegar, first described in RTN as a former oil executive whose hobby is automobile racing, has become the subject of controversy over his overt anti-Amtrak statements, and RTN called for his resignation in an editorial in the 2nd May issue of 1974.)

To begin with the most positive aspect of the report is to read it from the rear, for Appendix C, the last 2 pages of the 42-page booklet, contains DOT fuel consumption data that place passenger trains at the very top in terms of fuel economy. Here are the rail data given: coach train with new Amtrak diesels 270-360 seat miles per gallon; 6-coach train with E-8 engines 225-300 (these two types are the only vehicles listed to reach the 300 or more seat miles range); 4-5-coach train with E-8's 150-250; E-8's with luxury cars 50; Budd RDC 250; RDC using B&M data 150; French Turbo 110; Auto-Train 150. In comparison, intercity buses achieve 282 seat miles, urban buses 180-230. Automobiles range from 54 to 120 depending upon size and usage. Jet aircraft range from 30 to 60. The lowest fuel economy of all vehicles described was had by short-distance twin engine turbofan aircraft: 30-38 seat miles per gallon.

Aside from these encouraging fuel data there is little in the report to encourage the concerned reader about the official federal attitude toward passenger trains. The summary page lists 6 "highlights" of Amtrak operations in fiscal year 1974: increased ridership about 30%; revenue increased 35%; new capital improvement program approved; over 8000 employees directly on Amtrak payroll; overall quality of service improved; auxiliary services growing. Then there are 3 points "on the negative side": "The estimated deficit in fiscal year 1974 is up about $56 million or 40% over fiscal year 1973, totalling approximately $198 million. The fiscal year 1975 deficit may approach this same level." "Relating this loss to Amtrak's total passenger miles in fiscal year 1974 shows that the general taxpayer is supporting Amtrak operations in the amount of nearly five cents per passenger mile." "Overall on-time performance of Amtrak trains declined..." These summary points, and the scope and emphasis of the rest of the report show clearly that the DOT is taking a bookkeeping approach to one of the nation's most vital transportation requirements. Thru the report there is repeated mention of "the financial problem facing us in dealing with Amtrak's future." There is a great deal of summary information about Amtrak's operations, but little that is really new. Instead, the clear concern is "how much all this is costing us."

It is the responsibility of the Dept. of Transportation to formulate and oversee the vitally important transportation patterns of the entire nation. Nowhere in the report is there evidence that DOT leaders take rail travel seriously. Nowhere is there an effort, as there should be, to plan ahead for revitalization of transportation systems, to consider all modes, including rail travel in their important inter-relations and how the modes can best be balanced for the CONVENIENCE AND WELL-BEING OF ALL CITIZENS who must travel around in so many of their daily pursuits for both business and pleasure. Instead there is primarily an obsession with cutting back the taxpayer's involuntary load in supporting passenger trains. There seems to be no recognition that other travel modes demand involuntary expenses from citizens, even aside from tax money: what of the involuntarily incurred medical expenses

due to city air unhealthily polluted by automobiles? What of the involuntary tragedy and waste of killing automobile crashes? What of the involuntary costs involved in the mental and physical stress of aircraft noise and freeway toxicity?

All these factors and many more are the hidden costs of the failures of our present unbalanced transportation system, and they're also involuntary--just like taxes. The disadvantage Amtrak faces is that it's all above board--the costs are laid out there to see in the ledgers. And there's no easy way to tally the savings it creates elsewhere--by keeping more cars off the highway, by reducing stresses on other transportation systems, etc., etc. Only an unwise and incompetent administration fails to see beyond the figures on the ledger to the human reality of coping with the stresses of mobility in this last half of the twentieth century.

mixed train of thoughts

A CONGRESSMAN WROTE to Amtrak asking to have trains stop at Richmond, CA to connect with BART there. Amtrak replied (in early June) that its policy is to encourage intermodal connections, but since BART wasn't running to San Francisco, it wouldn't stop. But BART will begin runs to San Francisco on Sept. 16, so what about it, Amtrak?..... DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION made two recommendations to Congress recently: to retain the 55mph highway speed limit, and to end year-round daylight saving time, limiting it to the months of March-October..... RAILWAY POST OFFICES have received lots of attention from railfans, but what do you know about Highway Post Offices, with mail sorting carried out inside a moving truck? The last one in the U.S. ended operations June 30 on the Cleveland-Cincinnati route..... WE DIDN'T EXPECT so many inquiries about the Rand McNally Guide to Travel by Train, mentioned here last issue. We didn't make clear that we don't stock it; any book dealer should be able to order it from the publisher (author: Edward Wojtas; price: $1.95)..... PUBLIC AND INDUSTRY have until August 16 to comment to the ICC on their plans to require track upgrading on passenger routes to return it to May 1, 1971 condition; in a later step the ICC will push for upgrading to allow 110-mph passenger train speeds ..... TRANSPORTATION STAMP PROGRAM for the poor has been proposed by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Low-income people could buy stamps like current food stamps good for discounts on any type of transportation. A test of the idea is now being made in West Virginia..... IF YOU'RE ON the COAST STARLIGHT heading south from Eugene toward SP Tunnel 7 in the Cascades, 17 miles north of Crescent Lake, and you see a red nylon curtain over the tunnel rise to admit your train, you're not imagining things--it's a new device installed by SP to create cool air currents to solve engine overheating problems. The curtain is automatically actuated when the engine approaches within 500 feet..... AUTO-TRAIN ANNOUNCED on July 30 that its earnings for the year ended April 30 were up 95% on a 52% increase in revenues over last year. It issued a 5% stock dividend..... CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER for Amtrak (see last issue) is evidently still being sought, with Paul Reistrup of ICG a prime candidate. However, the $60,000 salary limitation at Amtrak is a handicap, and the DOT and NARP are asking Congress to raise it--it's not at all competitive with business salaries. (For instance, a newspaper has just mentioned that SP President Biaginni's salary is $340,000)..... EXPECT AMTRAK STOPS at Northampton, Mass. and Valley City, N. Dakota soon--probably with the Sept. 15 schedule changeover. Valley City is a restoration of a former stop of the MAINSTREETER and NORTH COAST LIMITED. Northampton is on the B&M 17.1 miles north of Springfield on the MONTREALER route, and in the past had frequent service, altho the MONTREALER itself didn't stop there..... THE BLACKHAWK, TRAIN 371 on Aug. 2 struck ties placed acros s the track by vandals, heavily damaging 2 RDC cars. The next day train 370 consisted of an IC geep, one RDC and an IC caboose. The latter was needed for signal purposes and to travel at speed in excess of 45mph.....

AMTRAK'S STATEHOUSE, TRAIN 300 as of Sept. 15 will leave St. Louis at 4:30am and and arrive Chicago at 9:50am, daily except Sunday..... COLUMNIST JACK ANDERSON reported July 29 on a confidential study done of the DOT by Secretary Brinegar, performed by a consulting firm, McKinsey & Co. The McKinsey report, which cost $365,000, said that the DOT is a vast, uncoordinated bureaucracy that wastes money on impractical projects like the Morgantown people mover but fails to properly integrate existing transport modes. Overall management of the department is the biggest improvement area needed, saysthe report..... THE PREAMBLE EXPRESS: a "pilot train" for the coming American Freedom Train, left Boston in mid-July, and was reported leaving Chicago on August 1 to run the whole projected route of the Freedom Train and drum up support. It consists of a D&H locomotive and 4 Reading commuter cars, a generator car, diner-lounge, lounge, and conference car with open platform. The Freedom Train itself will consist of 24 cars pulled by two Nickel Plate Berkshire steam engines..... WATCH FOR A railroad movie on ABC-TV at 10pm (EST) on Nov. 22--the "Great American Train Story," with Johnny Cash. Some Amtrak people helped in the filming, which includes steam runs, Promontory Point, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, scenes at Atlanta, Greensboro, NC and Nashville. It was produced by Webster-Rivkin Productions of Hollywood, and will be sponsored by American Gas Association..... WILL AMTRAK TRAINS continue to have to slow to 40mph when passing San Clemente, CA now that the most well-known resident there is no longer president? Santa Fe was required to slow down for about 7 miles past Nixon's estate on an otherwise fast track..... AMTRAK IS VERY close to announcing an order for its new bi-level passenger cars. It could be announced while this issue of RTN is in the mail..... NORTH COAST HIAWATHA eastbound was rerouted east from Seattle on Aug. 6 as a precautionary measure following a major explosion of a tank car in the Wenatchee "Appleyard" of BN. The blast, leaving a 30-ft crater, killed two people and injured 77. The tank car, which disintegrated, blew up at 12:30pm, shortly after the westbound EXPO 74 had cleared the area. The eastbound EXPO due in Wenatchee at 4:55pm, was held and passengers for Spokane bused on. The BN-Amtrak station was not seriously damaged, being 1½ miles north of the blast, and was partially protected by an unused BN roundhouse which absorbed much of the force...

THE NEW ADIRONDACK makes a customs stop at Lacolle at 10:39am southbound (train 68-76) and 5:20pm northbound (train 71-69)..... ONE HOSPITALIZED WOMAN, Mrs. Josette Molino of Burbank, CA injured in the SOUTHWEST LIMITED derailment of July 5, died in Topeka late in July. She had been listed in satisfactory condition with broken nose, ankle and facial cuts. And a San Diego man fell from the eastbound BROADWAY LIMITED last June 17 near Mansfield, Ohio. He was killed in apparently falling from a coach door while the train was traveling at 60mph.....

* * *

TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS has had 8 new trains added this year, increasing the fleet to 43. They include 6 Italian trains, one to connect Denmark and West Germany (the first to do so), and one between Brussels and Zurich..... PROF. EDWARD ULLMAN, University of Washington professor of geography recently appointed to the Amtrak board, went to Washington DC for the July 23 board meeting by train from Seattle--hopefully setting an example for others in the Amtrak hierarchy.... RAIL TRAVELERS WHO find Lexan loathesome may take heart--latest reports from the BN Como shops in St. Paul indicate that Amtrak cars sent there for rehabilitation have been losing their Lexan for regular window glass if the lexan is deteriorated enough to be opaque when the car arrives. Some lexan dome windows virtually unseeable have had the words "take **out**" written in red on the glass before shopping..... THE DETOUR OF the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY via C&O is reported working so well that the train actually arrived 50 minutes EARLY in Chicago on Aug. 5..... A SECOND ROUTE for proposed Amtrak passenger service between Champaign and Decatur is being considered--a route over the former Illinois Terminal Railroad Co. tracks running thru Monticello.....

(continued from page 4)

(Congressman Pettis' response: "As one pro-Amtrak person to another, I very much appreciate having the Rail Travel Newsletter which discusses railroad passenger car design. Now that more and more people are taking the train, I believe we need the kind of strong federal regulation of car design that we have for airplanes. Also, the kind of post crash investigations are needed for train accidents as we have for airplane crashes."

"I agree with you that Amtrak officials have evidenced a lack of foresight and real concern for the future of the passenger rail travel industry. Perhaps Mr. Lewis, former head of the large aviation company General Dynamics, should be replaced as head of Amtrak."

"Though not a member of the House Commerce Committee, I shall bring the newsletter article to the attention of my colleagues on the committee. Your interest and concern for the safety of people who travel with Amtrak is appreciated and is to be commended.")

San Bernardino, California — Norman K. Johnson

Dave Randall's letter urging simplification and standardization of railroad passenger rolling stock deserves the attention of the Department of Transportation and other agencies which seem intent on spending millions for exotic forms of passenger moving equipment. But I must emphatically dissent from Randall's suggestion that bedding be eliminated from his "huge fleet of slumbercoaches."

Certainly we need year-round slumbercoaches on all overnight trains, especially the STARLIGHT and trains between California and the East which have never had the low-cost sleepers. However, let's not turn them into third-rate accommodations of the Russian type with bare pantry shelves to sleep on. Amtrak's ridiculously high tariff for regular sleeper space makes expansion of slumbercoach service absolutely essential.

Concord, California — Donald W. MacLean

I was very disappointed to see that UAC's Turbo-trains will no longer be with us. I thought they were beautiful trains and with a little improvement, would really be something. I think the French trains are ugly, to be quite frank, as well as the rest of the European trains, even though their railroads are superior....

Ames, Iowa — Russel Lane

I would like to offer a correction regarding the conversion of the four former NP dome sleepers to Lounge-In-The-Sky cars, as mentioned on page 18 of the 1st July 1974 issue. You are quite correct in that three cars (9210,11,12) were converted to booze-domes by Auto-Liner. However, car 9214, refurbished by BN's Como Shops here in St. Paul, retained its <u>original</u> dome seating arrangement. I know this for a fact because I had the opportunity to examine it before Como released it to Amtrak.

White Bear Lake, Minnesota — Charles A. Rudisel

I rode the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY July 2 from Washington to Cincinnati and it was another Amtrak horror story. Of five jam-packed cars leaving Washington, only two had operating air conditioning-the sleeper "Wren" and one coach.

South of Charlottesville I was tackling my chicken when I heard the air go and we came to a jarring halt. Seems the Charlottesville coach (not a dome) had managed to come uncoupled and in parting had ripped out the air line and steam line. The crew scratched heads for some 20 minutes and we finally backed up, coupled on, and restored air (but not steam) to the car. Another half hour went by and the same thing happened. Really looked funny, after we had slid to a stop, to see the single coach sitting forlornly about a hundred yards behind the rest of the train. The delay this time was considerably longer, but the field repairs somewhat more effective because the rest of the trip was uneventful, with Cincinnati arrival 1 1/2 hours late.

Fort Lee, New Jersey — David L. Ross

Bouquets to Glenn Lee for another excellent essay, the one on car design. Mr. Lee not only addresses himself to timely subjects, he has a tremendous advantage over many writing for the various railroad magazines: a mastery of the English language.

Let us profoundly hope, with Mr. Lee, that the "new" Amtrak cars will not be a rolling version of fried chicken joints, hamburger stands and car washes, built in two days and collapsing in two years!

Claremont, New Hampshire — Rev. Walter Smith

Glenn Lee's article on Passenger Car Design is quite good. I think the idea of greater weight is probably most applicable to those trains used on the long distance "cruise ship type" services. Here speeds will likely not exceed 80 most of the time and seldom go over 100. In view of the poor condition of the tracks in question maximum protection for the passenger is a necessity. Cars will continue to jump the rails for some time to come.

Increasing the strength of the shell surrounding the passengers is a good idea. When this is done it remains important to have part of the cars easily collapsible to absorb the initial shock of impact. On conventional cars the vestibule has this additional function as might be guessed from the stock warning placed in this part of the car that "passengers are not to stand in the vestibules".

Athens, Georgia — Robert van Wormer

RTN is achieving the position as a major mouthpiece for those who advocate a strong rail passenger network in the U.S., but many more articles like Mr. Lee's will set its presti ge back several years.

Mr. Lee starts off with the highly erroneous implied statement that weight equals strength. To an engineer this is absurd. Strength is determined by the geometric distribution of a material in addition to its basic physical properties.

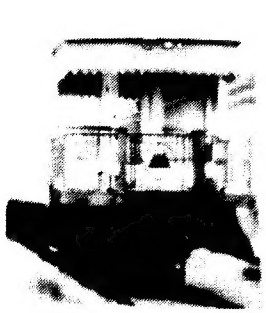
Mr. Lee then uses the IC wreck to prove that heavier cars are stronger. The Highliners weigh 70 tons, the old power cars weigh 70 tons and the old trailer cars weigh only 44 tons because the interior is aluminum. Yes, aluminum was extensively used in the 1926 cars. Thus the 4 new cars weighed 280 tons to 342 tons for the old cars. A trailer car was in the lead on the train of old cars moving at 50 mph or greater. The coupler on the old cars is mounted on a big heavy cast iron ball joint, which shattered on impact, permitting the car bed to ride up on top of the lower floor of the new cars. The center sill of the new cars was thus never given a chance to absorb any energy due to the failure of the old car. The structural integrity of the new cars was accidently confirmed when a new car being tested rammed another one at 30 mph; the couplers met properly, coupled, and stayed coupled. The car bodies did not rupture even though badly wrinkled, and injuries to test personal occurred when they were thrown against bulkheads.

Mr. Lee then rambles on for better than a page condemning the semi-monocoque or aircraft design which uses the skin to transmit forces, but does not mention the old Keystone tubular train or all the Santa Fe Hi-Levels which have no center sill and which are in daily service with Amtrak. Three-axle trucks do give a smoother ride, but are a maintenance headache...

Oak Forest, Illinois — Richard U. Cogswell, Jr.

Urban-Suburban Transit

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES voted 220 to 181 on July 30 to table an $800-million bill designed to give aid to mass transit systems. Objection to the bill was largely that it aided big cities, especially New York, at the expense of the general taxpayer. New York would have received 20% of the funds, Chicago 6.7%, Los Angeles 5%, northern New Jersey 4.4%, Philadelphia 3.2%, and Boston, Detroit, San Francisco and Washington DC each about 2%... A CRIPPLING STRIKE of AC Transit bus drivers in our area that began July 1 continues as of this writing (Aug. 13) unsettled. Union members twice voted down a settlement, and no talks are scheduled. A petition is being circulated asking the courts to get the buses running while negotiations proceed. Meanwhile in Southern California a 4-county bus strike began Aug. 12 when Southern California Rapid Transit District workers walked out. A Yellow Cab strike in the San Francisco area has just been settled, and S.F. Muni Railway drivers have been talking about leaving their jobs... LOS ANGELES AREA is in the midst of a controversy over a mass transit plan to be put to the voters next November. The most elaborate of several competing plans is an $8 billion high speed rail system plus express bus service... THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION for Public Transportation is emerging as the group to watch for news of rapid transit developments in the Lone Star State. Second issue of its newsletter recently appeared, and subsdriptions are $10 per year from TAPT, 2408 Ware Road, Austin TX 78741... MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION Authority, after much citizen insistence, instituted a new suburban rail fare structure, effective July 1, on the B&M lines north and west of Boston. Inclusion of the PC suburban lines is expected about Aug. 15... OF $29 BILLION in federal money destined for intercity transport systems and facilities in 1974, only $45 million is going for rail-related projects other than Amtrak or local mass transit systems, says the Assoc. of Amer. Railroads. Even including these, the amount is a midget compared with $24.8 billion for highways, $3.1 billion for airways, etc...



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